

## Message Text

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43/50

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

USIE-00 DPW-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 NEA-11

DRC-01 SAJ-01 ( ISO ) W

----- 036129

O 210910Z JAN 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9332

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAIGON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

USLO PEKING IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NY IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 822

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VS, CH

SUBJ: CHINA ISSUES STATEMENT ON HSISHA (PRACEL) INCIDENT

1. PRC FOREIGN MINISTRY JAN 21 ISSUED DEFENSIVE STATEMENT JUSTIFYING CHINA'S MILITARY ACTION IN THE HSISHA (PARACEL) ISLANDS. STATEMENT REFLECTS KEEN SENSITIVITY TO CHARGE THAT INCIDENT INVOLVES A BIG MILITARY POWER ATTACKING SMALL NATION. AS WITH EARLIER NCNA ACCOUNT, THE STATEMENT HIGHLIGHTS GREAT FORBEARANCE OF CHINESE PERSONNEL INVOLVED AND SELF-DEFENSE NATURE OF THE CHINESE RESPONSE. THE STATEMENT CHARGES THAT SAIGON WARSHIPS WERE THE FIRST TO OPEN FIRE IN THE NAVAL EXCHANGE. "MANY" CHINESE FISHERMEN AND MILITIAMEN REPORTEDLY  
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WERE KILLED BUT NO PLA PERSONNEL OR SHIP LOSSES ARE CITED.

LIKewise, IN A CONCILIATORY VEIN THE STATEMENT PROMISES THAT CAPTURED PERSONNEL WILL BE REPATRIATED AT AN "APPROPRIATE TIME," AND IT AVOIDS GLOATING OVER LOSSES INFLICTED UPON THE SAIGON SIDE.

2. THE PRONOUNCEMENT ALSO AGAIN REFERS TO SAIGON'S HAVING INCORPORATED ISLANDS IN THE NANSHA (SPRATLY) GROUP, BUT THERE IS NO SUGGESTION THAT THE SITUATION THERE IS COMPARABLE TO THE RECENT "MILITARY PROVOCATIONS" BY THE GVN IN THE HSISHAS. THE CONCLUDING WARNING THAT THE SAIGON AUTHORITIES MUST "STOP ALL MILITARY PROVOCATIONS AGAINST CHINA AND THEIR ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES OF INVASION AND OCCUPATION OF CHINA'S TERRITORY" OR TAKE "ALL THE CONSEQUENCES," DOES NOT APPEAR TO IMPLY THAT SOME NEW CHINESE ACTION MAY BE FORTHCOMING IN REGARD TO THE SPRATLIES.

3. COMMENT: THE STATEMENT DOES NOT MENTION THE REPORTED CONTROL BY CHINA OF ALL THE ISLANDS IN THE HSISHA'S INCLUDING THOSE FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY SAIGON. IF THESE REPORTS ARE TRUE, CHINA HAS CLEARLY ADVANCED ITS TERRITORIAL POSITION IN THE DISPUTE AS A RESULT OF THE RECENT INCIDENT. IT IS STILL UNCLEAR TO US WHAT SIDE TOOK THE INITIATIVE IN ATTEMPTING TO ALTER THE STATUS QUO, OR WHETHER IN FACT THE INCIDENT AROSE SPONTANEOUSLY. PREVIOUSLY, THE PRC HAD APPEARED PREPARED TO TAKE NO PHYSICAL ACTION ITSELF IN DISPUTES OVER THESE ISLANDS SO LONG AS THE OTHER CLAIMANTS ALSO DID NOT CHANGE THE EXISTING SITUATION. THERE IS NO REASON AT THIS TIME TO BELIEVE THAT THE AFFAIR IN THE HSISHA'S HERALDS ANY CHANGE IN CHINA'S POLICIES TOWARD THE SPRATLIES.

4. HANOI'S REACTION TO CHINA'S APPARENTLY EFFECTIVE SEIZURE OF THE HSISHA'S WILL BE INTERESTING TO OBSERVE. SILENCE WILL PROBABLY BE MORE AWKWARD FOR THE NORTH VIETNAMESE THAN IN THE PAST. CERTAINLY IT WILL BE A BURR IN SINO-DRV RELATIONS AND ONE WHICH WE SUSPECT MOSCOW WILL BE TEMPTED TO RUB IN.  
OSBORN

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## Message Attributes

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